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December 17, 2008

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## **FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA CONTRIBUTION EXTENDS HEALTH COVERAGE TO MORE THAN 65,000 CHILDREN**

*Healthy Families Program No Longer to Cap Enrollment for Young Kids*

(Sacramento) – With the help of funding from First 5 California, the state's Healthy Families program today moved to safeguard more than 65,000 infants and children from waiting lists for health coverage due to the budget crisis.

First 5 California will provide \$16.7 million to the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, the agency that administers Healthy Families. The funds will be used to pay health care premiums for children up to age 5 who are new applicants to Healthy Families through the end of the fiscal year in June.

"Today's action will allow the state to continue to enroll tens of thousands of infants and children in the Healthy Families Program, ensuring them access to much-needed health care services," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

With their unanimous vote Monday, State Commissioners affirmed First 5 California's ongoing commitment to helping ensure all children have access to health coverage, particularly during this period of high unemployment and economic instability.

"First 5's action shows that anything is possible when all sides come together to tackle a problem – even in the worst budget times," said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg.

Assembly Speaker Karen Bass added, "I thank the First 5 commissioners, including my appointees to the panel, for hearing our appeals and stepping up to the plate with a responsible resolution for these children."

Since voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, First 5 California has established itself as the largest and most stable funding source of health coverage for children up to age 5 in California. Last year, the agency spent more than \$48 million on children's health insurance.

(more)

“First 5 California is proud to help take this first step forward in expanding children’s health coverage as part of our larger mandate to serve the needs of our state’s youngest children,” said Kris Perry, First 5 California executive director.

Forty-seven county commissions are committed to presenting their commissioners with requests to help provide part of this funding in the coming weeks.

First 5 county commissions that have pledged support include: Alameda, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, Contra Costa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Tehama, Trinity, Tuolumne, Ventura, Yolo and Yuba.

**About First 5 California**

First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs for expectant parents and children up to age 5. For more information, please visit [www.first5california.com](http://www.first5california.com).

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